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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

25 August 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Possible Speech Themes

1. In response to your request of 3 August, we have prepared the attached memorandum which presents in expanded outline form the ideas or themes we think it might be useful to incorporate in the President's proposed mid-September television address.

2. As you can see from the order in which our thoughts are presented, we believe such a speech would have the most impact if it is pitched not only to the American people but also, inferentially, to Hanoi. We also believe it will have the most impact if it builds up to and ends with a call for immediate negotiations on a general ceasefire throughout Indochina. In short, we have tried to structure a position from which we benefit if Hanoi accepts but also benefit if Hanoi rejects or drags its feet on our proposal.

Richard Helms
Director

Attachment

Memos to + from DCI
Eyes Only

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Suggested Themes for Proposed Mid-September Presidential Television Address

1. If it is couched in the general format of a "report to the nation" and if it encompasses Indochina as a whole (with emphasis on Vietnam) rather than focussing exclusively on Vietnam, the proposed Presidential television address can be tailored to achieve three objectives:

a. Bringing the American people up to date but, at the same time, educating them by setting Indochina events in proper perspective so they can understand and appreciate their government's policy.

b. Conveying simultaneously though inferentially to Hanoi -- by the President's tone and what he says to the American people, not by direct statement -- the message that the US Government has its domestic situation well in hand and is not going to be pushed into a precipitate, disadvantageous settlement by domestic political pressures. The net impact of such a message would be to provide Hanoi with a sobering inducement to recognize that it has two basic policy options:

(1) Carry on the struggle indefinitely, with the continuing costs thereby involved, in the face of an increasingly successful Vietnamization program and concomitantly reduced degree of direct US involvement, or

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(2) Move to a more flexible and reasonable negotiating position.

c. Within the context of a and b above, setting the stage for US moves on the matter of prisoners of war and on ceasefire.

2. If these objectives are accepted as valid, their achievement could be facilitated by an address structured along the lines outlined below and incorporating the themes or points there mentioned.

3. Preamble. A preamble or lead-in along the following lines would be helpful in setting the right context:

My fellow Americans, I want to talk with you tonight about Vietnam and Indochina, about peace and war. I want to do this to bring you up to date on events in that troubled corner of the world where we have made such a heavy investment of material resources and of American lives, which are obviously beyond price. I want to report to you on progress in the conduct of the war and in our unending, unceasing search for an honorable conclusion to the struggle that can bring the peace we all desire, the honorable peace for which our treasure has been spent and for which over 43,000 of your fellow citizens, including the finest and most dedicated of our youth, have sacrificed their lives. I also want to report on developments that have occurred since 30 June when I issued my report on our Cambodian operations and told you how our government had kept all of the promises I made to you on 30 April when I told you about the commencement of those operations in Cambodia and the reasons they were necessary.

4. Nature of the Problem. With the stage set, the address could then make the point that events of this spring and summer have made one crucial fact abundantly and indisputably clear: The whole Indochina area is troubled by the legacies of a turbulent history. Throughout the area its people are clearly beset with complex, difficult and deep-rooted economic, social and political problems. But these are not the primary source of the strife and bloodshed that has ravaged Indochina for the

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past decade. Instead, as events of the past several months have clearly shown, the chief cause of current turmoil throughout Indochina is the expansionist ambitions and resultant aggression waged and directed by the Politburo of the Vietnamese Communist Party in Hanoi, which has completely controlled the government of North Vietnam since that country was established, is endeavoring to gain equal control over the government of South Vietnam and is also trying to reduce the governments of Cambodia and Laos into satellite subservience.

a. In Laos, the principal threat to internal stability and domestic tranquility does not derive from the ostensibly indigenous, though completely Hanoi-controlled, Pathet Lao. Instead, the primary source of troubles in Laos and the primary threat to the Lao Government's neutrality and independence comes from the 67,000 North Vietnamese troops that Hanoi has stationed, deployed and utilized on Laotian territory in persistent, flagrant violation of the formal commitments the Hanoi Government made at the Geneva Conference in 1962. It was not Pathet Lao forces that seized control of the Plane of Jars last spring but the 312th and 316th divisions of the North Vietnamese Army. These divisions continue to operate in north Laos far from the Ho Chi Minh trail or any area even remotely connected with the struggle in South Vietnam. Their mission is clearly that of waging aggressive warfare against the Laotian Government. It was North Vietnamese troops who played a major role in the seizure of the south Laos towns of Saravane and Attopeu. It is North Vietnamese troops who have conquered more than half the territory of Laos and placed it under Hanoi's colonial control.

b. In Cambodia, the picture of stark and naked North Vietnamese aggression is, if anything, even clearer. The peaceful Cambodian people with their long and unique cultural traditions of which they are so justifiably proud have designs on no one and threaten no one. They want no part of war or killing, they seek only to be left alone in neutral independence. Instead, they find themselves compelled to fight for that independence at the very outskirts of their capital against an invading

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North Vietnamese Army. My fellow citizens, there is no internal Cambodian Communist force of any size or consequence and the war now plaguing the once idyllicly peaceful land of Cambodia is in no meaningful sense of the term a "civil war." It is Vietnamese Communist forces -- the North Vietnamese Army augmented by so-called "VC" units under North Vietnamese Army command -- who have seized control of much of north-eastern Cambodia who have harassed most of the rest of the country, who have come to the very outskirts of Phnom Penh and who have positioned their military units among the ruins of Angkor Wat. This last point merits particular attention because perhaps nothing better illustrates Hanoi's ruthless and callous indifference to everything save the blind dictates of its aggressive ambition. The ruins of Angkor are priceless and irreplaceable. They are the pride and glory not only of the Cambodian people but of all civilized mankind. In a vain effort to free them from any risk of being touched by war, the Cambodian Government pulled all of its forces out of the area around the ruins and declared them "open." These monuments to man's artistic genius have no military value. By no conceivable stretch of the imagination can they be construed as threatening North Vietnam's security or territorial integrity. But in an act of incomprehensible barbarism, Hanoi has jeopardized the ruins by positioning its forces among them and exploiting them as a sanctuary and base for operations.

c. In South Vietnam we find the same pattern. It can no longer be pretended with any shred of plausibility that the struggle there is primarily an internal "civil war." The documentary and other evidence of Hanoi's total control over the struggle is overwhelming and irrefutable. From South Vietnam's northernmost province of Quang Tri to the southern Mekong delta, it is the North Vietnamese Army that provides the stiffening and the muscle without which what was once called the "insurgency" would collapse.

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5. Progress Report (Laos and Cambodia). Having made the point that the primary cause of Indochina's current troubles is Hanoi's policy of armed aggression, the speech could then move to describe briefly the military, political and/or social progress that has been made throughout the area in the face of unremitting military pressure from Communist forces built around the North Vietnamese Army. Laos and Cambodia could initially be touched on to lead into a more comprehensive discussion of South Vietnam. Any comments on Laos and Cambodia would have to be reviewed just prior to the actual delivery of the address and adjusted to reflect developments that may have occurred between now and then.

a. Laos. On the military side, the point could be made that the Lao Government forces, including tribal irregulars, checked the offensive launched by the NVA divisions last January and, despite the initial successes of the North Vietnamese forces in the Plain of Jars, these forces were stopped by early March and have been unable to advance further since then. Furthermore, the NVA-spearheaded Communist forces in north Laos were unable to achieve their major objective of seizing MR II headquarters at Long Tieng and dispersing Lao Government forces in that area. On the political side, the Laotian remarks of the address should be keyed to Souvanna's exploration of the possibilities of some negotiated local settlement. These moves are now in the initial stages, hence, the actual text of the address will have to reflect developments of the next few weeks.

b. Cambodia. Though again, events of the next few weeks will affect the actual text of any remarks on Cambodia, the overall accomplishment of the Lon Nol government in surviving for six months in the face of Vietnamese Communist pressure can be noted, as can the steadily improving performance of the Cambodian Army which was never trained to fight this kind of war and which, at the outset, was hopelessly outgunned and outclassed by Hanoi's well equipped and battle hardened forces. Reference can truthfully and usefully be made to the impact on the Cambodian situation of the supply losses and dislocation suffered by Communist forces during the allied operations against Hanoi's Cambodian bases and sanctuaries in May and June. This section should hammer home, and probably close with the point that despite the exaggerated claims of a Sihanouk who remains under Communist protection outside Cambodia and the claims of Communist propaganda,

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the bulk of Cambodia's population has rallied behind Lon Nol to combat what the Cambodians clearly regard as outright foreign invasion by the Vietnamese Communist forces under Hanoi's command.

6. Progress Report (South Vietnam). When we look at the overall situation in South Vietnam in its political, social, economic and military dimensions it is extremely difficult for us in America to get a clear picture of the present scene or the progress it reflects. Three factors contribute to this difficulty.

(1) South Vietnam has many problems, some caused by war, some of much deeper historical or social origin. Its people and its leaders are brave, resourceful and resilient. But they are human, as are we; and they make mistakes, as do we. Their errors, their problems and their difficulties are much more dramatic and much easier to report than their achievements. A small anti-government demonstration has far more impact on a prime time TV news program than a gradual improvement in a whole village's way of life. Thus our press and media inevitably give far more detailed coverage to -- and us a much clearer picture of -- our allies' shortfalls than their progress.

(2) The struggle in South Vietnam is a complicated and complex one. It is not marked by decisive single battles or radical changes immediately evident as such at the precise moment they occur. It is easier to catalogue the difficulties and problems rampant at any given moment than to appreciate the progress that has been achieved over months and years of struggle.

(3) Few of us in America know or appreciate enough Vietnamese history to have any inkling of the magnitude of the challenges the people of South Vietnam have had to face and master. For a variety of complex historical reasons, when they attained their full freedom from colonial dependence fifteen short years ago, they inherited a political structure with no institutional roots, no

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institutional cement and none of the factors working for political cohesion that we who have developed them over the centuries simply take for granted. Furthermore, the South Vietnamese have not only had to face the challenge of building an independent nation where none existed before, but as they have built they have also had to defend what they were building from Hanoi's steadily increasing aggressive attack.

It is in light of these considerations that we ought to look at what South Vietnam has accomplished while recognizing the many problems that still remain.

a. Military.

(1) In the military field, the past two and a half years have witnessed a steady and, in the aggregate, dramatic improvement in the allies' military position and a matching decline in the Communists' military strength and fortunes. Since the failures of Hanoi's 1968 offensives at Tet, in May and in August of that year -- which even Hanoi now recognizes as disasters -- Hanoi has shifted to a lower posture of conserving assets in what Hanoi calls "protracted war." Hanoi made this shift of strategy and tactics not because it wanted to but because it had to, because its massive drive for early victory was a costly failure.

(2) In recent months, events in Cambodia have further complicated Hanoi's already mounting military problems. Here the address can develop the impact of the loss of sanctuaries and supplies, then note that Hanoi now has an increasingly sharp dilemma: the force it must use to menace Cambodia and the force it must use to menace South Vietnam is the same force. It is the Communists whom Hanoi's aggressive designs have compelled to fight an increasingly difficult two-front war, not the allies.

(3) Over the past two years, the South Vietnamese armed forces have played an increasingly predominant role in this improving military position and assumed an increasingly predominant share of the burden. This can be illustrated

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with data current at the time of the address on casualties, combat strengths, combat days of operation and percent of KIA inflicted on the enemy by the RVNAF. Trend lines on all these data series reflect solid GVN achievement particularly when SVN's 17 million population base compared to the US base of 200 million.

b. Political.

(1) Despite the many problems rooted in its troubled past and the many challenges that obviously remain to be overcome, South Vietnam's overall record of achievement in building a constitutionally-based political structure is remarkable. South Vietnam's present leaders are easy to fault, as are every country's leaders, but it is also easy to forget that despite the pressures and problems of war and rapid social change, South Vietnam has been free of major political upheavals for over five years.

(2) Those who criticize President Thieu and Vice President Ky as unrepresentative or lacking in mandate ignore or forget that they won their positions in a hotly contested election in 1967, with eleven contending slates -- an election in which 57.0 percent of South Vietnam's entire adult population took part. The significance of this degree of participation becomes apparent when we recognize that this election was conducted in the midst of war by a people with no tradition of national elections and that this 57 percent figure is based on our best estimate of South Vietnam's total adult population, including those fighting on the Communist side as well as those fighting with the government and all in between. South Vietnam's 57.0 percent figure, given these considerations, does not compare unfavorably with our own percentage record of total adult participation in our last five Presidential elections, which ranges between a 63.4 percent high in 1960 and a 60.1 percent low in 1956. (Figures are 1952 - 62.6, 1956 - 60.1, 1960 - 63.4, 1964 - 62.0, and 1968 - 62.8.)

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(3) In addition to an elected President and Vice President, under its constitution South Vietnam also has an elected bi-cameral legislature which is very far from a rubber stamp. "President Thieu has as much vigorous opposition from and problems with his Upper and Lower House as I and my immediate predecessors in this office have sometimes had from our own Congress." Appropriate comments could then be folded in on the free swinging Senate electoral campaign now in process which will be over by the time of the President's address.

(4) Electoral and other politics at the national level are only a small part of South Vietnam's political story. An even more important and much less well known part deals with increasing popular participation at the immediate local level -- the hamlets (which are the smallest South Vietnamese political units) and the villages (which compare roughly to our city precincts or rural townships). Since the spring of 1967, 94 percent of South Vietnam's hamlets and 95 percent of its villages have elected their own councils to direct their immediate day to day affairs.

(5) This steady and by now extensive spread of direct participation by South Vietnam's people in their own governance reflects -- and has been made possible by -- another gradual political development of major significance. Over the years, and often unnoticed by our press, the GVN has slowly but steadily extended its writ until now over 92 percent of South Vietnam's people live in areas controlled by their government, about 6.5 percent live in areas best described as contested, and less than two percent live in areas controlled by the Communists. (These figures are based on July HES/70 data and will need adjustment prior to the address.) Despite their extravagent public propaganda claims, the Communists realize and privately recognize how few of South Vietnam's people they actually control. Captured documents indicate their own estimate of the population in which they term "liberated areas" is less than 9 percent of South Vietnam's total. (CDEC Log No. 07-2424-70, 24 June 70.

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18 February 1970 entry in notebook gives 1969 figure for population in liberated areas as 1,439,000 or 8.4 percent of 17 million.)

c. Economic and Social.

South Vietnam clearly has many unsolved social and economic problems, many of the latter concentrated cruelly in urban areas and grounded in the inevitable inflationary pressures of wartime. But again, these often reported problems should not obscure or eclipse South Vietnam's record of great economic and social progress, particularly in the countryside. Bit by bit, amidst all the pressures, tensions and horrors of war, rural South Vietnam has undergone profound changes in recent years that amount to a social and economic revolution. The bulk of South Vietnam's farmers and rural people are now living not only a better life than they lived before, but a life that a few years ago they would never have dreamed possible. Many factors have combined to bring this change about: Allied military successes which have driven Communist forces away from most centers of population concentration and brought the benefits of security, open roads and waterways and -- by the cruel standards of the past two decades -- relative freedom from the horrors of nearby combat. A rapid mechanization of agriculture -- tractors, pumps, and motors for vehicles and boats -- which have eased the need for the backbreaking toil of centuries past and made it possible for people to ride over routes that their parents and ancestors had to walk. All these, plus fertilizer, miracle strains of rice, radios and even television in the remotest reaches of rural South Vietnam -- and many other things both tangible and intangible -- have contributed to this revolution in the quality of South Vietnamese rural life. The GVN, admittedly far from perfect, is doing all it can to further these economic and social gains, including the implementation of an imaginative and far reaching land reform program that will eventually benefit about 7,000,000 people -- or nearly half of South

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Vietnam's total population. The record of rural achievement written by our Vietnamese allies over the past few years -- and the resultant improvements in rural prosperity and the quality of rural life -- would have been impressive under any circumstances, but such a record written in the midst of war is impressive indeed.

d. Ferment and Discord.

The evolution of South Vietnam's military and political development over the past few years has, of course, not been a story of smooth, uninterrupted progress. There have obviously been setbacks and shortfalls and will certainly be others along the way. The process of rapid social and political evolution in South Vietnam has been yeasty and inevitably marked, on occasion, by ferment and discord. Yet this ferment is a healthy sign of growth and the occasional discord needs to be seen in proper perspective. Many critics of our policies, our Vietnamese allies and President Thieu's government on the one hand charge the Saigon Government with being a repressive dictatorship but simultaneously tax it with being ineffective whenever the surface waters of Vietnamese politics are troubled by demonstrations or dissent. Furthermore, some of these critics measure our Vietnamese allies against absolute performance standards that no country in wartime could ever meet and never pause to compare Saigon's behavior with the behavior of the Communist leadership in Hanoi.

(1) As the leader of a country with no democratic or institutional traditions and a country engaged in a war for survival, President Thieu understandably feels the need for a strong exercise of central authority. But he is certainly no dictator and his regime is far, far less repressively authoritarian than the rule of the Communist Party Politburo in North Vietnam.

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(2) The active demonstrations in recent weeks of student groups, veterans groups and Buddhist groups in South Vietnam and the restraint with which these demonstrators were generally handled prove that dissent is certainly not stifled in South Vietnam. When have demonstrations against government leaders or policies or other overt manifestations of dissent ever been permitted in Hanoi?

(3) South Vietnam's legislature is far from a rubber stamp. For example, it has long blocked passage of economic decrees the GVN considers essential. Legislators frequently criticize President Thieu, his Ministers and his policies. Many strongly opposed to him and his policies have campaigned strongly, even stridently in elections including the Senate elections just completed. When has the National Assembly in Hanoi ever stalled or disapproved legislation sought by the Communist Party? When have North Vietnamese legislators ever dared to criticize the Party, its leadership or its policies? When have opponents of the Party ever been permitted to seek, let alone win, electoral office in North Vietnam?

(4) Saigon has about thirty daily newspapers, most of them often critical of the government and some of them incessantly and stridently so. How many newspapers are there in Hanoi? How many of them ever dare question, let alone criticize, the policies of the Hanoi Government or its leaders?

(5) Beyond the question of toleration of dissent there lies the question of terror. There have undoubtedly been individual South Vietnamese -- and American -- military or civil officials who under the stress of war or in the climate of

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combat have acted harshly or done things that cannot be condoned, whatever the provocation or extenuating circumstances. But such actions of individuals or groups do not reflect and have never reflected the deliberate policy of the South Vietnamese Government -- or, of course, the American Government. The widespread, systematic and utterly ruthless use of terror, assassination and physical liquidation of present or potential future political opponents -- or innocent individuals whose family origins are politically suspect -- has been a matter of deliberate policy on the part of the Vietnamese Communist Party for forty years.

(6) South Vietnam is no Jeffersonian democracy. No country ever is in wartime, even ours. But civil libertarians who remain silent about Hanoi's policies and behavior while belaboring our South Vietnamese allies are, at a minimum, employing a very double standard.

7. The Diminishing US Role.

a. After sketching the cause of Indochina's current problems -- Hanoi's aggression -- and tracing the progress of the recent past, particularly in South Vietnam, it could then effectively be pointed out that the progress of the past year has been recorded during a period of progressive diminution of direct US involvement, a process that even this year's Cambodian developments has not reversed and, indeed, which these developments will probably facilitate if Hanoi persists in trying to wage a three-front war. Various statistics can be adduced to support this proposition, all of which will need to be reviewed and adjusted just prior to the President's speech: By 15 August 1970, US troop strength in Vietnam was down to about 406,000 from its 15 April 1969 peak of just over 543,000. The same statistics that demonstrate improved ARVN performance also demonstrate the steadily diminishing US combat role. Thus, whether

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Vietnamization "can work" is no longer a debatable issue. It is demonstrably working since the GVN's military and political position has continued to improve as the degree of direct US participation in the struggle has markedly declined.

b. After the above point is made, it can be noted that events of the recent past suggest that if Hanoi does not change its policies or its position on negotiations, the best prognosis is an indefinite period of struggle. The Lao, the Cambodians and above all the South Vietnamese will continue to resist North Vietnamese invasion and Hanoi's attempt to acquire political domination over them by force of arms. The free people of Indochina will combat aggression as long as it is waged, but they will clearly need progressively less US assistance in fighting what they recognize as their battle for their independence.

8. The Quest for Peace.

a. While the US will, of course, honor its commitments to those in Indochina who have sought our support for their efforts to maintain their independence and neutrality, no sane person or nation wants war and unending combat. Thus the US has tried repeatedly to induce Hanoi to join us and our allies in a quest for an honorable peace, worked out at the negotiating table rather than fought out on the battlefield. This quest will continue as long as the struggle continues.

b. The obstacles to peace do not lie in any want of US, or South Vietnamese, desire to find an honorable settlement through negotiation. As we have repeatedly said, and say again, we are willing to discuss anything -- anybody's points, whatever their number or substance. The obstacle to negotiated settlement has been Hanoi's insistence on allied agreement to surrender as a pre-condition to negotiations. In public and in private Hanoi has always adamantly insisted it will not bargain about

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anything unless the US agrees in advance to total withdrawal on a fixed timetable and to a dismemberment of the GVN via an imposed coalition. Hanoi has refused even to discuss a political contest via the ballot box or any election in which the people of South Vietnam could express their uncoerced preferences. Instead it has insisted that its followers be handed a major share of power despite the fact that even the Communists privately acknowledge that their control extends over less than ten percent of South Vietnam's population.

c. Hanoi adamantly insists on allied surrender as a precondition to negotiation apparently because it believes -- mistakenly -- that its will is stronger than that of those it is attempting to coerce and that it can eventually gain its ambitions through the prolonged and continued use of armed force.

d. We and our South Vietnamese allies have often been criticized for pursuing the chimera of "military victory" in this essentially political struggle. But neither we nor our allies have ever attempted to challenge the Hanoi Government's right to exist or rule North Vietnam. We have never attempted to dictate North Vietnam's political arrangements at the point of a bayonet or through the barrel of a terrorists' pistol. It is Hanoi who is attempting to dictate the political shape of South Vietnam, of Cambodia and of Laos by force or arms. It is Hanoi in short -- not we -- that still mistakenly believes victory is attainable by military conquest and has, hence, adamantly refused to join us in a quest for peace through serious negotiations.

9. The Call.

a. After setting above context and explaining to his audience why he has done so, the President could say that while those in Indochina directly involved will not barter away their independence, nor will we urge them to do so, we are sick of war as are all the people of

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Indochina and indeed the world. There has been far too much horror, tragedy, killing and waste of human lives. The pursuit of ambition by armed force is insane. He therefore calls on Hanoi to join us and our allies in at least two steps toward ending the suffering and human tragedy and shifting the debate over political differences from the battlefield to the conference table.

b. First we ask Hanoi to move out of common humanity on one specific issue: prisoners of war. We ask that Hanoi at least identify those whom it or its followers hold captive and we will reciprocally do the same. We propose that all POW's who are sick or wounded and all who have been held in captivity for more than two years be immediately repatriated to their homeland if they wish to go. We call on the International Committee of the Red Cross to supervise this exchange of information and prisoners and promise the ICRC all the support we can possibly provide.

c. Secondly, though we all recognize the issues involved in the Indochina struggle are many and complex, we ask Hanoi in the name of humanity to join us immediately in a quest for ways to stop the killing. Ambassador Bruce /and Ambassador Lam -- if the necessary advance coordination can be worked out with Saigon/ has (have) been instructed to ask his colleagues across the table at the next meeting to join him in an urgent effort to negotiate an immediate ceasefire throughout Indochina or, if this is not possible, in as many local areas as a ceasefire can be arranged. We recognize the complexity of the problems involved but will willingly and eagerly enter into these ceasefire discussions with no preconditions. There has been too much killing and we want the killing to stop. No one stands to gain further advantage from letting it continue. We, therefore, call on the other participants in the Paris negotiations to join us now in developing arrangements through which the guns can be stilled and the bloodshed ceased while further political details of final settlement are hammered out at this bargaining table or some wider forum.

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